GOVT 2306.506 – TEXAS GOVERNMENT
Stephan F. Austin University

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor: Brian Naples  Semester: Fall, 2020  
Email: naplesbm@sfasu.edu  Department: Government  
Office Hours: N/A  Phone: 903-693-2043

NOTE: As an adjunct instructor at SFA, I do not have an office on campus. However, I am a full-time faculty member at Panola College in Carthage, Texas and can regularly be reached on my office phone 1 pm and 3 PM each week day.

CLASS TIME AND PLACE

This is an online class. It requires a minimum of 3 hours of online course work each week.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will cover the “Origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.” (Taken from the ACGM)

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

This course uses an Open Educational Resources (OER) Textbook. The book is provided free of cost to the students. It is posted in the course shell on D2L. The book is title Texas Government 2.0

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Program learning outcomes define the knowledge, skills, and abilities students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of an academic program. These learning outcomes are regularly assessed to determine student learning and to evaluate overall program effectiveness.

After studying all materials and resources presented in the course, the student will be able to:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.

These learning outcomes are derived from the Texas Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual.

GENERAL EDUCATION CORE CURRICULUM
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six core learning objectives: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

By enrolling in GOVT 2306 – Texas Government, you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the CRITICAL THINKING, WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATION, TEAMWORK AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY requirement.

In any given semester, one or more of the following Exemplary Educational Objectives for the political science/government Foundational Component may be assessed.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
2. Communication Skills – effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
3. Social Responsibility – intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to effectively engage in regional, national, and global communities
4. Personal Responsibility – the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

EXAMS

Exams will account for 50% of the class grade. The exam material will not be cumulative, but students should expect the material on one exam to relate to the material of another exam. Each exam will cover assigned material, primarily out of the textbook. Each student is responsible for completing the exams in accord with class policy. Make-up exams will only be given in accord with the make-up policy. The online exams will require the use of Proctorio, an online exam security program. The service will be provided to the students through the college.

ASSIGNMENTS

Students will receive an assignment grade for this class. This grade will account for 30% of the overall class grade. This grade will consist of assignments, and discussions posted on D2L or given in the classroom. The assignment grade is counted as a percentage of the total points earned out of the total points possible. For example, if all the assignment point values add up to a total of 400 points and a student earns 300 of those points, the student's assignment grade will be 75%. Specific directions, policies, and grading instructions may be found in each assignment.

CIVICS EXERCISES

This class requires students to participate in service-learning, which accounts for 20% of the class grade. Service learning is the active involvement in the political and civic environment. It consists of such activities as voting, contacting a representative, donating (money or goods) to a charitable institution or political group, participating in a public demonstration, and many other activities. A list of service-learning activities may be found under the service-learning module. Collectively, these activities enhance the well-being of our communities and our political system. Each activity is worth a set number of points.
The final service-learning grade is measured as a percentage of total points earned out of the total points possible. All service-learning must be done in accord with the class policies. Further policies may be found in the service-learning assignment.

ATTENDANCE

An attendance record will be kept for students who take this course over the internet. Attendance will consist of a student's ability to complete the regularly scheduled assignments. Students will receive a "present" mark for each assignment completed by the due date. Students who complete an assignment late will receive a tardy mark on their attendance grade. Every two tardy marks will count as one class absence. Students who fail to turn an assignment in receive an absent mark on their attendance. A student will receive a failing grade for the course if they do not complete at least 80% of the assigned material. Make-up assignments will only be given in accord with the class make-up policy.

The instructor reserves the right to alter a student’s attendance grade (for better or worse) based on their ability to uphold the internet etiquette policies. Inappropriate online behavior during an assignment will result in a failed assignment grade and an absent attendance mark for the assignment (i.e. “dismissal from a classroom”). Persistent inappropriate behavior may result in dismissal from the course, a failing grade, and further disciplinary actions in accordance with college policy.

Students are responsible for attending meetings or proctored exams as required by the instructor and the college. All scheduled meetings/exams shall be announced one week(s) in advance. Students are responsible for arriving in a timely fashion and adhering to the class policies set by the instructor along with the rules of the facility in which the meeting takes place. This course shall further adhere to the class policies specifically defined in the Student Handbook.

CLASS GRADE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Distribution</th>
<th>Grade Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams (50%)</td>
<td>(A) = 90-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Assignments (30%)</td>
<td>(B) = 80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning (20%)</td>
<td>(C) = 70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance*</td>
<td>(D) = 60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(F) = Below 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INTERNET ETIQUETTE

All online users should take great care in their internet behavior. Students are expected to remain respectful in all electronic communication as any publicly or privately shared media will be viewed by others. This communication includes all written material, submitted assignments, pictures, audio recordings, and video recordings. The instructor reserves the right to censor inappropriate or obscene material in a public forum which is hosted or regulated by SFA. Obscene material consists of any material (written, visual, or auditory) lacking academic value, containing libelous or slanderous information, or is repugnant to common standards of good taste and etiquette.

Students who violate proper internet etiquette in an assignment shall fail the assignment on the first offense and shall fail the class upon the second offense.

No student shall post material concerning a fellow classmate in any online forum (whether hosted by the college or another party) which so debases the classmate as to impede their ability to freely and without stigma participate in and/or complete the course.
No student shall copy, alter or share files of course material submitted by another student. All of the standards of the academic honesty policy shall apply to all online course material.

The instructor and the college do not assume responsibility for the disbursement of any grade information a student freely gives of himself in private correspondence or in a public forum.

Students shall be held accountable for posting libelous or obscene material debasing to the instructor, the course, or the college on any electronic forum hosted or expressly regulated by the college. The instructor and the college reserve the right to remove said material and hold disciplinary actions in accord with college policy. At all times, students are expected to uphold the standards of student conduct as defined in the Student Handbook.

The instructor and the college shall have the right to remove a student from the course (resulting in a failing grade) and take appropriate disciplinary actions (as defined by the student handbook) for violating any of the aforementioned policies.

**MAKE-UP WORK**

Make-up work will only be given for exams in the case of a serious conflict. A serious conflict consists of a medical emergency, family death, or previously scheduled school related event. Incarceration, lack of child care, work conflicts, and vacations do not constitute a serious conflict. All make-up exams must be taken within one week of the original due date providing the student’s inability to complete the exam as originally scheduled falls within the criteria of a serious conflict. The instructor reserves the right to change the exam format for make-up exams to protect the integrity of the exam. A student is only permitted one make-up exam during the course. No make-up work will be given for weekly assignments since they are all open for a minimum of one week prior to their due date.

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

The government department recognizes the right of the instructor and the students to address controversial subjects. Academic freedom is in essence the freedom of speech in the classroom through which ideas may be challenged and truth may be pursued. Consequently, the department firmly upholds the right of instructors and students to express in writing, speech, or symbolism their understanding, opinions, and knowledge on controversial subjects. The US Supreme Court has consistently upheld that the freedom of speech “concerning public affairs is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government.” (*Garrison v. Louisiana*): that “speech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values and is entitled to special protection” (*Connick v. Myers*): and “that Government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable” (*Texas v. Johnson*). Therefore, academic freedom in this public, government funded course protects the instructor and students who express opinions on public issues which some may deem offensive.

Academic freedom does not protect the libel or slander of *private persons*. Libel and slander consist of written and verbal defamation of a person’s character through the *intentional* disbursement of *patently false* information. (*New York Times v. Sullivan* and *Gertz v. Robert Welch*). Furthermore, academic freedom does not protect obscenity as it is possible to freely discuss controversial issues without being obscene. Obscenity follows three basic guidelines: (a) whether "the average person, applying contemporary community standards" would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest, (b) whether the work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct
specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (Miller v. California). In an appeal to the “community standards” of the classroom, students are required to wear modest clothing and maintain a standard of behavior consistent with the college code of conduct so as not to disrupt the learning environment. The instructor and the college reserve the right to remove students from the class, fail students, and hold disciplinary actions in accord with college policy for issues of libel, slander, and obscenity.

Finally, academic freedom and free speech are not excusatory protections for the violation of the student code of conduct, for the poor performance on graded materials, or for the failure to submit graded materials.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic Integrity (A-9.1) Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy at [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp)

**WITHHELD GRADES SEMESTER GRADES POLICY**

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to [http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/).

**MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**

SFASU values students’ mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.


COURSE SCHEDULE

The schedule for this 16-week course is below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 1-4</th>
<th>Unit 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 1: Texas Geography, Demographics, and Public Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 2: Foundations of Texas Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 3: Federalism and State Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 4: The Texas Constitution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 5-8</th>
<th>Unit 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 5: The Texas State Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 6: Texas Governors and Executive Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 7: The Texas Court System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 8: Local Government in Texas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 9-11</th>
<th>Unit 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 9: The Criminal Justice System in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 10: Public Policy in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 11: The Texas Economy and Fiscal Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks 12-15</th>
<th>Unit 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 12: Elections and Campaigns in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 13: Political Parties in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 14: Voting and Political Participation in Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chapter 15: Interest Groups and the Media in Texas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

POSTED MATERIALS

- Each week, students must read the assigned textbook chapter, complete several quizzes and assignments, and participate in the required class discussion board.
- All posted materials open on Monday morning and close on Saturday night. Exceptions may be made for holidays.
- From time to time, the instructor may provide recorded lectures to accompany the textbook readings.
- Each unit ends with an exam and a civics exercise assignment.
- The civic exercises are all open for submission at the start of the semester, but will close on different due dates.
- The exams will only be open for a single day and will require the use of Proctorio to ensure their online security.